

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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R 190535Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7752

S E C R E T VIENTIANE 1321

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, LA

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON ACTIONS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION
OF U.S. POLICY OBJECTIVE IN LAOS

1. A VARIETY OF DEVELOPMENTS IN RECENT WEEKS HAVE GIVEN GROUNDS FOR CONCERN THAT THERE MAY BE SOME SERIOUS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THIS MISSION AND WASHINGTON WITH REGARD TO U.S. POLICY TOWARD LAOS AND THE PROGRAMS WE MUST PURSUE IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT THAT POLICY. FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF VIENTIANE IT APPEARS TO US THAT A PEACEFUL POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE LAO CONFLICT IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WE ARE THEREFORE VERY CLOSE TO A LONG-AWAITED RESOLUTION OF THE INDOCHINA WAR IN THIS COUNTRY WHEREAS IN CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM THE WAR RAGES ON. IT IS ODD THEREFORE TO FIND THAT THESE SENSITIVE AND TO DATE VERY SATISFACTORY DEVELOPMENTS SEEM TO ELICIT CONTRADICTORY AND INCONSISTENT GUIDANCE WITH REGARD TO SECURITY-RELATED MATTERS IN THIS COUNTRY.

2. ALTHOUGH IT HAS NOT BEEN CLEARLY EXPLAINED TO THIS MISSION, WE HAVE INDICATIONS THAT FUNDING FOR THE LIF FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS FISCAL YEAR HAS BECOME A PROBLEM. WE UNDERSTAND THAT \$1.9 MILLION HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ARMY FUNDS TO PAY FOR THE LIF AS A RESULT OF A DRASTIC REDUCTION IN DOD FUNDS. WE ARE FURTHER INFORMED THAT NO REPEAT NO FUNDING HAS
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BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR THE FOURTH QUARTER. AMERICAN FAILURE TO HONOR A COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT THE RESIDUAL LIF THROUGH THE FY-74 TRANSITIONAL PERIOD WOULD OBVIOUSLY HAVE VERY DELETERIOUS POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS.

3. RELATED TO THE FOREGOING PROBLEM IS A SERIOUS DISCREPANCY IN REGARD TO OUR SUPPORT FOR RLGA FORCE LEVEL DERIVING FROM TWO CONTRADICTORY WASHINGTON MESSAGES. SECDEF 1577/201858Z DECEMBER 73 INDICATED THAT DOD AND STATE WERE PLANNING FOR AN RLGA FORCE LEVEL OF 60,000 AT THE END OF FY-74 AND 50,000 AT THE END OF FY-75. WE INFORMED THE LAO THAT RLGA REDUCTION PLANNING COULD BE BASED ON THESE LEVELS. HOWEVER, SECDEF 2299/111923Z NOW INDICATES THAT FUNDS CANNOT BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR SALARIES FOR THE ADDITIONAL 10,000 TROOPS WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE SUPPORTED UNTIL RLGA REACHES THE 50,000 LEVEL IN JUNE 1975. THIS MESSAGE CONTRADICTS THE EARLIER DECISION TO SUPPORT A 60,000-MAN LEVEL. IF SECDEF 2299 IS NOT REVERSED, THERE WILL BE SEVERE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL REPERCUSSIONS HERE. WE HAVE BROUGHT THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH WE VIEW THIS SITUATION TO WASHINGTON'S ATTENTION (VIENTIANE 1138). CINCPAC 152033Z ALSO ENDORSED THIS VIEWPOINT. I HOPE WE WILL GET AN EARLY AND FAVORABLE RESPONSE.

4. WASHINGTON'S APPARENT LACK OF CONSTANCY IN SUPPORT OF THE LAO FORCES IS IN CURIOUS CONTRAST TO DIRECTIVES WE RECEIVE ON RETENTION OF THE THAI SGU AT A LEVEL FOR WHICH FUNDS SIMPLY DO NOT EXIST. THE LESS THAN 4,000 THAI SGU DO NOT NOW REPRESENT AN EFFECTIVE MILITARY DETERRENT AND THEIR CONTINUED PRESENCE CAN HAVE A NEGATIVE RATHER THAN A POSITIVE POLITICAL EFFECT. WE URGE THE SGU WITHDRAWALS BE ACCELERATED AND THAT THE PERSONNEL BE TERMINATED AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER.

5. IN FY-73 WE REDUCED OUR MILITARY PROGRAM FROM \$360 MILLION TO \$274 MILLION. IN FY-74 IT WAS REDUCED FROM \$105.3 TO \$80 MILLION. AT THE SAME TIME, WE HAVE MADE AVAILABLE MANY OF OUR ASSETS (AMMUNITION, SANDBAGS AND AIRCRAFT) TO ASSIST THE CAMBODIANS. WE ARE PREPARING
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TO TURN OVER TO THE THAI GOVERNMENT ALMOST THE ENTIRE THAI SGU INVENTORY BETWEEN NOW AND JULY. GIVEN THE AMOUNTS WHICH HAVE BEEN REPROGRAMMED, IT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE SHOULD NOW BE FACED WITH RENEGING ON COMMITMENTS WHICH ARE OF GREAT POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE AT THIS SENSITIVE MOMENT. IF FUNDS ARE REQUIRED FOR FAR IN FY-75 WE BELIEVE SOME REPROGRAMMING OF THE 4000 T-28 SORTIE CAPABILITY COULD PROVIDE THE FUNDS TO MEET THESE NEEDS.

6. WE HAVE BEEN TRYING UNSUCCESSFULLY FOR MANY MONTHS TO HAVE AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE OVER LAOS RESTRICTED TO THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL AREA AND HAVE REPEATEDLY BROUGHT TO

WASHINGTON'S ATTENTION THE FACT THAT ARDF FLIGHTS OVER THE NORTH DO NOT PROVIDE ANY TACTICAL OR STRATEGIC INFORMATION OF SIGNIFICANCE. NOTWITHSTANDING OUR REPEATED RECOMMENDATIONS, THESE FLIGHTS CONTINUE AND WHILE THEY MAY BE CONSIDERED BY SOME TO DEMONSTRATE AMERICAN VIGILANCE AND DETERMINATION, THEY ARE IN FACT A WASTE OF TIME AND A POTENTIALLY DESTABILIZING FACTOR IN THIS COUNTRY.

7. IT IS ALSO IMPERATIVE THAT WASHINGTON AGENCIES ASSOCIATED WITH AID AND DEVELOPMENT RECOGNIZE THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE SITUATION HERE HAS CHANGED. I CONSIDER, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE INTEREST OF THE U.S. AND OF LAOS WOULD BE BEST SERVED BY RECOGNIZING THE FACT THAT LAOS IS NO LONGER A BELLIGERENT IN THE INDOCHINA WAR AND THAT PROSPECTS FOR ITS RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CAN BEGIN NOW. IN OUR OPINION, DONOR COUNTRIES ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO UNDERTAKE PROGRAMS HERE IF ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE WHICH DISASSOCIATE LAOS FROM THE DESULTORY MEETINGS HELD UNDER WORLD BANK AUSPICES AND THAT WE SHOULD CONSIDER ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WOULD INVOLVE THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES AS WELL AS OTHER POTENTIAL DONORS.

8. AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE DEAN AND AID DIRECTOR MANN WILL BE IN WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK ON CONSULTATION. THIS MESSAGE IS MEANT TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE OPERATING PROBLEMS AND DICHOTOMIES WHICH WE
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CONFRONT IN LAOS AT THIS TIME, THE RESOLUTION OF WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAINING THINGS HERE ON AN EVEN KEEL. WHITEHOUSE

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